Registered Dental Assistants Working in Alberta
1991

Prepared by:
The Workforce Planning Unit
Professions and Occupations Bureau
5th Floor, Kensington Place
10011-109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3S8
Telephone: (403)427-2655

August 1992

93-00790/

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Introduction

The workforce planning unit in the Professions and Occupations Bureau collaborated with the Alberta Dental Assistants Association in the collection of workforce data during its annual membership renewal in September 1991. A short survey designed by the workforce planning unit (see Appendix 1) was included with the annual membership renewal notices mailed to Association members during the week of September 16-20, 1991. The survey requested information on employment status, practice settings, and hours worked in September 1991.

Overall, the response rate to the employment survey was good. Of the 2,364 currently registered dental assistants in Alberta, 1,645 (69.6%) responded. Members residing outside Alberta, non-registered members, and members with restricted or revoked registration were not included in the response rate calculations and the data analysis.

The workforce planning unit provided the analysis of the survey data. An overview of this analysis is given below. A series of tables which provide more detailed data on the employment profile of registered dental assistants (RDAs) are also included in this report.

Highlights of Survey Data

- A total of 83.5 percent (1,373) of RDAs reported that they were employed as dental assistants on September 1, 1991. Among those reporting employment, 76.2 percent (1,046) were employed on a full-time basis while 18.8 percent (258) were employed part-time. A small proportion of RDAs were employed on a temporary/contract basis (5.0%). A total of 4.6 percent (75) of RDAs were seeking employment as dental assistants.

- The average number of hours worked as a dental assistant per week during the month of September was 36.1 hours for full-time permanent, 19.0 hours for part-time permanent, 31.6 hours for full-time temporary/contract and 9.3 hours for part-time temporary contract.

- The majority of employed RDAs reported that they had only one job as a dental assistant (93.6%). A small proportion reported having two dental assistant jobs (5.7%).

- Most of the employed RDAs worked in a general dentistry practice setting (77.0%). A much smaller proportion were employed in a specialty practice (15.6%) or in public health (4.4%).

- Almost one-half of the RDAs in a specialty practice setting were employed in orthodontics (46.9%). A much smaller percentage of RDAs in specialty practice settings were employed in pediatric/pedodontics (15.6%), prosthodontics (10.4%) and periodontics (9.5%).

- The proportion of permanent full-time and part-time RDAs varied across practice settings. RDAs were more likely to be employed on a permanent part-time basis in a specialty practice setting (24.2%) or in a public health setting (35.0%). RDAs were comparatively less likely to

be employed permanent part-time in a general dentistry practice setting (16.6%).

• The employment profile of RDAs who had been registered for 10 or more years was considerably different from the employment profile of RDAs registered for a shorter period of time. For example, RDAs registered for 1-5 years were much more likely to be employed on a full-time basis (75.6%) than were RDAs registered for 10 or more years (43.5% full-time). Conversely, RDAs registered for 10 or more years were much more likely to be employed on a part-time basis (33.1%) than were RDAs registered for 1-5 years (7.0% part-time).

• There was also some variation in the type of practice setting chosen by RDAs registered for 10 or more years compared to RDAs registered for a shorter period of time. RDAs registered for 10 or more years were somewhat more likely to work in a specialty practice setting (19.8%) or in a public health setting (8.2%). A comparatively smaller proportion of RDAs registered from 1-5 years worked in a specialty practice (12.3%) or in public health (3.1%).

• Not surprisingly, the proportion of RDAs seeking employment as a dental assistant was higher among RDAs recently registered from 1-5 years (6.1%) compared to RDAs who had been registered for 10 years or more (3.4%).

Table 1

Employment Status of Registered Dental Assistants, September 1, 1991		
Employed as a Dental Assistant:	N	(%)
Full-time Permanent	1,046	63.6
Part-time Permanent	258	15.7
Full-time Temp/Contract	32	2.0
Part-time Temp/Contract	37	2.3
Employed in Another Field and:		
Seeking Employment as a Dental Assist.	17	1.0
Not Seeking Employment as a Dental Assist.	39	2.4
Not Employed and:		
Seeking Employment as a Dental Assist.	58	3.5
Student	21	1.3
Maternity Leave	76	4.6
Not working for some other reason	61	3.7
Total	1,645	100

Table 2

Practice Setting of Registered Dental Assistants September 1, 1991*		
	N	(%)
General Dentistry	1,044	77.0
Specialty Practice	211	15.6
Public Health	60	4.4
Other Practice Setting	41	3.0
Total	1,356	100

* Includes RDAs who reported permanent or temporary employment. 17 of the employed RDAs did not report practice setting and are therefore missing from the table.

Table 3

Practice Setting by Employment Status of Registered Dental Assistants September 1, 1991*					
	Permanent		Temp/Contract		Total
Practice Setting	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
General Dentistry	827 (79.2%)	173 (16.6%)	21 (2.0%)	23 (2.2%)	1,044 (100%)
Specialty Practice	154 (73.0%)	51 (24.2%)	4 (1.9%)	2 (1.0%)	211 (100%)
Public Health	34 (56.7%)	21 (35.0%)	2 (3.3%)	3 (5.0%)	60 (100%)
Other Practice Setting	23 (56.1%)	11 (26.8%)	3 (7.3%)	4 (9.8%)	41 (100%)

* Includes RDAs who reported permanent or temporary employment. 17 of the employed RDAs did not report practice setting and are therefore missing from the table.

Table 4

Employment Status by Number of Years Registered as a Dental Assistant, September, 1991*			
	Number of Years Registered		
Employment Status	10 or more years	6-10 years	1-5 years
Permanent Full-time	204 (43.5%)	265 (64.2%)	574 (75.6%)
Permanent Part-time	155 (33.1%)	50 (12.1%)	53 (7.0%)
Temp/Contract Full-time	7 (1.5%)	9 (2.2%)	16 (2.1%)
Temp/Contract Part-time	19 (4.1%)	10 (2.4%)	8 (1.1%)
Employed in Another Field	14 (3.0%)	15 (3.6%)	10 (1.3%)
Seeking Employment as a Dental Asst.	16 (3.4%)	13 (3.1%)	46 (6.1%)
On Maternity Leave	17 (3.6%)	32 (7.8%)	26 (3.4%)
Not Working for Some Other Reason	37 (7.9%)	19 (4.6%)	26 (3.4%)
Total	469 (100%)	413 (100%)	759 (100%)

* Includes RDAs who reported employment status. Data on number of years registered as a dental assistant was missing for 4 RDAs.

Table 5

Practice Setting by Number of Years Registered as a Dental Assistant September, 1991*			
	Number of Years Registered		
Practice Setting	**10 or more years**	**6-10 years**	**1-5 years**
General Dentistry	253 (77.1%)	256 (66.8%)	533 (83.0%)
Specialty Practice	75 (19.8%)	57 (17.2%)	79 (12.3%)
Public Health	31 (8.2%)	9 (2.7%)	20 (3.1%)
Other Practice Setting	20 (5.3%)	10 (3.0%)	10 (1.6%)
Total	379 (100%)	332 (100%)	642 (100%)

* Includes data on RDAs reporting a practice setting. Data on the number of years registered as a dental assistant was not available for 3 RDAs.

APPENDIX 1

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PROVIDE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND SPECIALTY AREAS OF DENTAL ASSISTANTS. PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESTIONS BELOW AND RETURN WITH THE TOP PORTION OF YOUR ANNUAL RENEWAL FORM.

1. **Name** _____ **Registration number**_____

2. **Your employment status on September 1, 1991 was:** (Check only one box)

A. EMPLOYED AS A DENTAL ASSISTANT:(Indicate for your primary employer only)
- ☐ 1. full-time permanent
- ☐ 2. part-time permanent
- ☐ 3. full-time temporary/contract
- ☐ 4. part-time temporary/contract

B. EMPLOYED IN ANOTHER FIELD AND:
- ☐ 5. seeking employment as a dental assistant
- ☐ 6. not seeking employment as a dental assistant

C. NOT EMPLOYED AND:
- ☐ 7. seeking employment as a dental assistant
- ☐ 8. seeking employment in another field
- ☐ 9. student
- ☐ 10. retired
- ☐ 11. on maternity leave
- ☐ 12. on other leave
- ☐ 13. not working for some other reason

3. **If you were employed as a dental assistant on September 1, 1991:**

a. **In what type of practice setting were you employed?** (If employed in more than one setting, indicate the practice setting of your primary employer.)
- ☐ 1. general dentistry
- ☐ 2. specialty practice → specify type of specialty: _____
- ☐ 3. public health
- ☐ 4. other practice setting → please specify:_____

b. **What was the average number of hours you worked per week during the month of September?** (List only for your primary employer)
_____average number of hours worked per week

c. **Do you *currently* have more that one job as a dental assistant?**
- ☐ 1. no
- ☐ 2. yes →how many jobs? _____(number)

THANK-YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS FORM!

PLEASE ENCLOSE WITH THE TOP PORTION OF YOUR ANNUAL RENEWAL FORM and mail to:
Alberta Dental Assistants Association
#204, 10335 - 178 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, T5S 1R5 (Phone 486-2526)